



Autism Speaks And The SunTrust Foundation Introduce Financial Planning Tool Kit For Families With Special Needs - Comprehensive approach to planning the financial well-being of children and adults with disabilities

Apr 6, 2016

NEW YORK, April 6, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- In partnership with the SunTrust Foundation, Autism Speaks, the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, today introduced the [Autism Speaks Special Needs Financial Planning Tool Kit](#), a resource designed to answer the most pressing financial questions facing families of people with autism and other disabilities.

The kit, which can be downloaded free of charge, was written by experts who have both professional and personal experience with financial planning for special needs. The SunTrust Foundation provided funding for the development of the tool kit.

Almost one in five Americans has a disability, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Family budgets are often strained by related expenses including therapy, assistive technology or special transportation. For example, although some people with autism have careers that give them financial independence, others need extensive financial support throughout their lives from the government, their extended families or both.

"Parents and guardians are understandably overwhelmed by a range of complicated financial decisions," said Lisa Goring, Autism Speaks executive vice president of programs and services. "This tool kit gives them reliable information and expert guidance in planning for their child's financial well-being."

In addition to the tool kit, Autism Speaks and SunTrust Foundation will host workshops later this year in Tampa, Orlando, Miami, Atlanta, Charlotte, Richmond and Washington, D.C. A dedicated financial access coordinator will join members of Autism Speaks' Autism Response Team to connect families to information and financial planning resources in their area.

"We are committed to helping develop resources that move people from financial stress to confidence, and put our purpose of '*Lighting the Way to Financial Well-Being*' into action," said David Fuller, president of the [SunTrust Foundation](#). "Our partnership with Autism Speaks, which led to the creation of this tool kit and the upcoming workshops, will provide valuable tools and information for families facing these unique financial circumstances."

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The tool kit draws upon the expertise of financial advisors and consultants, attorneys and bankers, several of whom have a child or other family member with special needs. Each expert specializes in helping families develop strategies that build and protect assets.

Topics include:

- **Access to funding:** Getting Medicaid, Social Security and other benefits a child may be entitled to receive
- **Special needs trusts:** How to find money to fund a trust, and how a trust can protect assets
- **Financial products:** What special needs families should know about insurance, retirement plans and annuities
- **ABLE accounts:** New tax-preferred savings accounts that can help secure a child's future
- **Guardianship and conservatorship:** Determining who will make medical and legal decisions for a minor or an adult who cannot do so
- **Finding the right professional:** Twelve important questions to ask
- **Creating a budget:** Setting realistic goals with worksheets, online tools and trackers

"We're grateful for the generosity of our partners at SunTrust Foundation," said Goring. "They see the value of investing in people with disabilities and ensuring that they and their families have the best possible quality of life."

About Autism

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders - autism spectrum disorders - caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by communication difficulties, social and behavioral challenges, and repetitive behaviors. An estimated 1 in 68 children in the U.S. is on the autism spectrum.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization. It is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Since its



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inception, Autism Speaks has committed more than \$570 million to its mission, the majority in science and medical research. On the global front, Autism Speaks has established partnerships in more than 70 countries on five continents to foster international research, services and awareness. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit AutismSpeaks.org.

About SunTrust Foundation

The SunTrust Foundation is dedicated to the company's purpose of *Lighting the Way to Financial Well-Being* by engaging organizations to advance financial confidence. Grants and activities focus primarily on financial empowerment, but also include education, health and human services, civic improvement and cultural growth. The SunTrust Foundation supports American Red Cross disaster relief efforts and contributes as a United Way Global Corporate Leader. Established in 2008, the SunTrust Foundation has proudly provided grants totaling more than \$100 million throughout the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

SOURCE SunTrust Foundation

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